

# Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Terry Goddard Announces Lawsuit against Scottsdale Dating Service**

(Phoenix, Ariz. – June 18, 2008) Attorney General Terry Goddard today filed a lawsuit against Sun West Video, Inc., doing business as Great Expectations for Singles (Great Expectations), a dating service located in Scottsdale, alleging that the company violated the Arizona Consumer Fraud Act and the Arizona Dating Referral Services Act.

Also named in the lawsuit are Sun West Video's President John R. Meriggi, Great Expectations' Director Michael Buhler and sales representative Geri Schencker.

The lawsuit alleges that Great Expectations used coercive sales tactics, misrepresentations and other deceptive practices to sell expensive dating service memberships to Arizona consumers, typically costing thousands of dollars. The alleged illegal practices include:

- Misrepresenting to consumers the overall number of Great Expectations' participating members, the number of participating members in certain age groups and the number of new members joining the service each month. Great Expectations also told consumers that two to three marriages occurred between members every month when it had no credible basis for such statements.
- Misrepresenting to consumers that it had conducted a criminal background check on all of its members.
- Using membership agreements that illegally extended initial memberships beyond one year and were designed to mislead consumers to believe they had no right to cancel or rescind the agreements.
- Unlawfully obtaining consumers' credit information as soon as they arrived at the Great Expectations office to meet with a representative, before they received a sales presentation or agreed to purchase a membership.
- Misrepresenting to consumers that Great Expectations staff would help them prepare their profiles and select other singles.
- Using high-pressure sales tactics during one-on-one, hours-long presentations to consumers, during which:

- Sales representatives urged consumers to contact their credit card companies to get an increased credit limit sufficient to pay for a membership.
- Sales representatives encouraged consumers who wanted time to think about purchasing a membership to put down a deposit to hold a heavily discounted “first visit incentive” price, when doing so had the effect of obligating the consumer to pay for a membership.
- Sales representatives showed potential new members written profiles and photographs of people they said were members of Great Expectations and were available for dates. In fact, many of the profiles and photographs were not of members or were of members on inactive status and unavailable for dating.

The lawsuit was filed in Maricopa County Superior Court. The Attorney General’s Office is asking the Court to:

- Prohibit Great Expectations from violating the Arizona Consumer Fraud Act and the Arizona Dating Referral Services Act.
- Require the defendants to return to all consumers any money or property they acquired through illegal acts.
- Impose a penalty of up to \$10,000 for each violation of the Arizona Consumer Fraud Act.
- Require the defendants to reimburse the Attorney General’s Office for costs of the investigation and reasonable attorneys’ fees.

Assistant Attorney General Cherie Howe is handling this case.

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